

## BOOK DESIGN IN UKRAINE IN THE LATE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

*Victoria Oliynyk*

*Department of graphic design and advertisement  
Kyiv National University of Culture and Arts  
36 Yevhen Konovalets str., Kyiv, Ukraine, 01601  
viktorya0308@ukr.net*

### Abstract

In Ukraine, the breakthrough of the 1980s and 1990s was characterized by book design development as a multi-faceted and indicative phenomenon, since at all times the art immediately reacted to any historical changes and reflected the socio-cultural processes. The purpose of this article is to define and compare special artistic features of the book design in Ukraine in the period of 1980s and 1990s. The article considers special aspects of book design development in the territory of modern Ukraine at the close of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, examines isolated and correlated artistic features of the Ukrainian book editions of the 1980s and 1990s as two qualitatively different periods, and describes the main characteristics of the relevant book products. Moreover, the leading book masters, whose work reflected specifics of this period and became trademarks of the abovementioned age, are determined. Consequently, book design development in Ukraine in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century looks rather ambiguous from an artistic point of view. The radical structural and political state reorganization in the early 1990s divided its history in two separate stages and influenced all art spheres without exclusion, including the book art. One of the main significant changes in the book design sphere was a transition from classical forms, which depended on the outdated production technologies in the Soviet era, to the electronic design and active computerization of all operations in the sphere of book production. This new environment influenced the worldview of artists and book designers. Put in other words, the mentioned circumstances influenced the restructuring and reformatting of the entire industry, and strengthened the role of a designer as a co-author of a book. This ensured access to new printing standards and contributed to the development of book publishing industry in Ukraine.

**Keywords:** book design, illustration, artistic image, Soviet era, art commercialization, transformations.

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### 1. Introduction

In Ukraine, the breakthrough of the 1980s and 1990s was characterized by book design development as a multi-faceted and indicative phenomenon, since at all times the art immediately reacted to any historical changes and reflected the socio-cultural processes. This fact defines the relevancy of this article, as the existing scientific research does not adequately cover the book art tendencies of the abovementioned period, leaving aside many interesting phenomena and key personalities. Therefore, this research needs to be significantly complemented in order to reproduce a comprehensive and consistent history of the book design in Ukraine. The artists and designers respond to the time challenge by looking for the new visualize forms in their ideas, mastering new art means and technical tools.

Therefore, the object of this research is the development of book design on the territory of Ukraine in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. The subject is the corresponding book design.

### 2. Analysis of literary data and statement of the problem

The researches were interested in various issues related to the book art to some extent. The results of their research have become a scientific basis for the current article. Theoretical principles of composition and structure of a book helped to define and systematize artistic features of a publication as a whole [1, 2]. It is worth to separate an idea about the fact that most separate elements of a book is finished, integral art phenomena, integral art sections with independent historic development, only partially connected with the art book development [3]. We completely agree with this statement, because it has concrete examples. Especially, a print that occupies a leading position in a book “serves” different genres of graphics; bookplate art was separated as a special branch of graphics almost in the very beginning of a book sign in XVI century, that is at that closely connected to a book by its definition and function.

The analysis of co-existence of the notions Artist and Book determination of an illustrator's role in creation of an edition turned out to be interesting [4]. But from our point of view, it is

groundlessly to separate an artist's main role in this process, because the pre-print preparation of book products consists of the great complex of actions, named "design" that is essentially wider than just art decoration. For example, breadboarding or make-up is able to improve or worsen the most quality work of an artist.

The modern research of the current article was based on the art explorations. Works of authority specialists add an image of the development of Ukrainian imitative art and form theoretical principles of new scientific aspects of this branch that has a great importance for our research [5]. Especially, the problem of national identification of Ukrainian fine arts [6] is essentially reflected also on book design, analyzed in this article.

On the basis of the studied visual and theoretical material, it can be suggested that the main feature of the analyzed period was its dynamic transformation (i. e., flexibility of the art concept of publishing houses and book masters in accordance with the period) under external influences. After all, "The art of every century, and now of every decade, focuses on and reproduces the time, space and mental state of the society in which it was born" [7]. The researcher correctly notices that the works of artists clearly depict the aspirations, phobias, hopes or hopelessness, suffering, the search for salvation of both authors and peoples.

The author of the current article has investigated how the abovementioned statement was reproduced in the field of book art. For this purpose, it is convenient to divide the analyzed period in two decades in order to compare the corresponding art features of separate time segments in the sphere of book design.

### 3. Aim and tasks of research

The purpose of this article is to define and compare special artistic features of the book design in Ukraine in the period of 1980s and 1990s.

The following tasks were set for attaining this aim:

- 1) to consider special aspects of book design development in the territory of modern Ukraine at the close of the 20<sup>th</sup> century;
- 2) to define book masters, whose work reflected specifics of this period and became trademarks of the abovementioned age;
- 3) to distinguish and to confront artistic features of the Ukrainian book editions of the 1980s and 1990s as two qualitatively different periods.

### 4. Materials and methods

In general, the book is a synthetic product, which combines different "composite systems" that interact in a complex way (verbal, constructive, figural, sign-oriented, ornamental) [8] to gain one purpose and, therefore, requires the same complex analysis. So, it is obvious that the analysis of the indicated period involves consideration of book design in the socio-cultural context as a complex process related to book design. It should be noted that, in the 1980s, the notion of a book design had not yet been popularized in Ukraine. Although, the preconditions and the need for its emergence in the scientific usage were mentioned in the first half of the last century [9, 10]. The research methodology includes an analysis and systematization of corresponding signs, and iconography, chronologic, classification methods and interviewing.

### 5. Experiment

In relation to creativity and organization, the Ukrainian fine art of the Soviet era and book graphics in particular, developed aside on the world artistic processes. Instead, it was subject to the strict ideological control of the Party functionaries, who determined the themes and judged on the quality of artworks. Despite this situation, many researches characterize the artistic life in Ukraine of 1980s as a period of true prosperity [11–13]. At that time, the development of the recognized Ukrainian art centers, such as Kyiv, Kharkiv, Lviv, Odessa and others, was noticed. These centers were distinguished by their own cultural traditions, artistic individuality, and their specific artistic methods.

The Ukrainian book design of the 1980s was better represented by key works, which were unique bearers of coded figurative content of the period (**Fig. 1**). Among them are *Sadok vyshnevyy kolo khaty* (Beside the cottage cherry-trees are swinging) by T. Shevchenko (1982, Veselka Publishing House: illustrations by O. Ivakhnenko, book layout and ornaments by V. Yurchyshyn), *Tvory* (Works, in two volumes) by O. Kobylanska (1982, Dnipro Publishing House: illustrations by V. Yurchyshyn), *Yak Mamay do Kanady yizdyv* (Mamay's journey to Canada) by V. Brovchenko (1984, Radyanskyi Pysmennyk Publishing House: illustrations by A. Vydonyak), *Lisova pisnya* (The song of forest) by Lesya Ukrainka (1989, Veselka Publishing House: illustrations by V. Perevalskyi), *Slovo o polku Ihorevim* (The tale of Igor's campaign, 1989, Radyanskyi Pysmennyk Publishing House: illustrations by V. Lopata).



**Fig. 1.** *Sadok vyshnevyy kolo khaty* (Beside the cottage cherry-trees are swinging) by T. Shevchenko (1982, Veselka Publishing House: illustrations by O. Ivakhnenko, book layout and ornaments by V. Yurchyshyn)

As it is known, illustrative material intensifies the emotional impression from artistic language and, therefore, requires a special attention [14]. According to a number of art experts [15, 16], the national book illustration of the Soviet era, despite the oppressions, managed to go far beyond the utilitarian function of book design and formed into a sphere of art, where the strict criteria of artistic quality, intellectual creativity and true skills were cultivated. The geniuses of the Ukrainian book graphics, including H. Havrylenko, S. Karaffa-Korbut, H. Yakutovych, I. Ostafiyshuk and other well-known artists, created decent conditions for the further development of the book design industry. They became a good example of talent and hard work combination for their young followers, such as S. Yakutovych, I. Vyshynskyi, O. Ivakhnenko, V. Perevalskyi, H. Halynska, M. Kompanets, V. Hordiyshuk and others.

Serhiy Yakutovych (1952–2017), whose career started in the 1970s, clearly outlined the state of the Ukrainian-Soviet graphics of those times: “Moscow and Kyiv were in close relationships, there was a constant cultural exchange; against this background, a large powerful school of book graphic art was formed. Its founders were mostly Ukrainian artists, who consciously felt their own value among their fellow artists” [17]. Although, while analyzing the book graphics of the end of

the Soviet period, S. Yakutovych noted a poor quality of printing, despite the fact that teachers at the higher educational institutions of arts paid great attention to the technical aspect of typography.

Instead, Valentyn Hordiychuk ironically spoke about the artworks of the Soviet masters, drawing attention to a certain naivete of the majority of works [18]. This fact eloquently testifies about the true goal of an artist and whom he served – the art or government. Nowadays, in the opinion of the artist, such transparency was replaced by rationality, which resulted in commercial orders of artworks, which, however, had not changed the essence of the art.

From a technological view, Kyiv researcher I. Shalinskyy observes the stabilization of revival process and development of the best traditions of the publishing graphics: “All pictorial forms were replicated by means of all varieties of high, deep and flat printing with the use of additional graphic accessories and technologies, without going beyond the limits of fixed stylistic decisions and a certain set of compositional variations” [19].

In addition to the artistic illustrative and decorative book design of high quality in 1980s, it is also important to note its layout arrangement of a high quality that met the relevant requirements of the GOST State Standards, as well as traditional artistic language and noticeable stylistic typology, resulted in popularization of the socialist realism method.

After declaration of the Ukrainian independence on August 24, 1991, a rather painful process of transition from a total control to freedom in artistic world was initiated. This process created both benefits and new problems. A habit to work inside clear boundaries of censorship and stylized forms led to a primitive artistic thinking of many artists. This phenomenon, joined with the art commercialization, led to division of new book editions on the so-called “mass consumer products” and “elite products”. Distribution of low quality publications that met simplified aesthetic and polygraphic criteria was a reason of a temporary stagnation of book design development in Ukraine. However, at the same time, it gave a start to a new stage in the publishing industry, which was qualitatively different from the previous one.

With the emergence and development of computer technology in the early 1990s, both quantitative and qualitative correlations between artistic and technological factors of graphic design had changed. In this new environment, almost all design processes, related to graphics, pre-print stages, overlay proofs, expert evaluation and printing, were performed with the help of digital technology and electronic tools. And this fact ensured the visual perfection of editions and, undoubtedly, influenced the artistic design, changing its emotional and figurative system, diversifying the tactile and visual perception of the printed surface, providing the printed patterns with specific features – in short, combining productive functions with “artistic” and “human-made” features [20].

Thus, at the end of the last century, the arsenal of an artist was enriched by useful tools, which resulted in diversification of book art. Now the book illustrations differed by author’s techniques, artistic methods and materials. The artists were in search of individuality, originality and were able to achieve it. For example, the highly professional design and illustrations of such books as Pan Kotskyi (1997, designer – K. Lavro), Snihova Koroleva (layout – 1990s, edition – 2000, designer – V. Yerko) of Ukrainian A-BA-BA-GA-LA-MA-GA children’s publishing house were repeatedly nominated as the best editions at international book exhibitions.

H. Halynska, professor of the National Academy of Visual Arts and Architecture, notices a significant difference between the students of educational institutions of arts of her generation and the modern creative young people – their students [21]. According to the professor, the future professionally qualified artists today, unlike their predecessors, do not have limits in their self-expression. They have a possibility to carry out many interesting experiments in their search for personal style. This, undoubtedly, positively contributes to their future independent practice. This opinion is proved by the contemporary art exhibitions. In particular, the All-Ukrainian Triennial of Book Graphic Arts in Kyiv, where the artworks demonstrate the boundless imagination and originality of creative ideas of the young generation of the Ukrainian designers [22, 23].

## 6. Results of research

The modern book masters, when comparing their artwork several decades ago with the present days, noticed a drastic difference of qualitative completeness of the graphic art, where ac-



cents on high skill were noticeably shifted. Delicate handwork of a graphical designer, which was previously considered as a standard of perfection, was replaced by a genuine and creative idea of an artist. And the innovative technology was used as a tool for visualization of an author's imagination. Surely, it improved the processes of pre-printing preparation of a publication, but also altered its essence and transformed the art into a production.

The presence of ethno-national motifs in the Ukrainian book after declaration of independence of Ukraine became important and, thus, revealed the diversity and personal distinction of the artistic methods. It can be observed in the works of V. Yurchyshyn, D. Paruta, Y. Stashko, and V. Semeniuk, who were already known among artists, and who actively worked in the period of the abovementioned reforms.

The focus on "ethno" in the book design was formed against the background of the modern cultural movement in our country – the popularization of the national traditions. The preferences of customers, the interest of readers and the positive perception of ethno style in book design in combination gave a powerful impetus to the artists, provided their professionalism and spirituality [24, 25]. Therefore, contemporary book artists have a purpose to strive for and the direction for self-improvement, since they have perfect works of classics of Ukrainian traditional book graphics as a model (**Fig. 2**).



**Fig. 2.** Half-title to story *Khudozhnyk* (Artist) by T. Shevchenko (1984, Veselka Publishing House: book layout and ornaments by V. Yurchyshyn). Artistic technique – paper, India ink, feather

Therefore, artistic and figural expression of a design solution and all its elements (such as font, decoration, illustrations, text, layout) gradually took a prominent place in the analysis of book editions of the 1990s. Obviously, it resulted from an introduction of new electronic tools and innovative image processing technologies into the book publishing sphere. Unlike the previous years, when the illustration was in harmony with other components of a book ensemble and retained its own artistic self-sufficiency, in this period, the illustration of a literary work acquired a different meaning – rather decorative and tied to the general figurative solution of a publication.

## 7. Discussion

The theme of book design development in Ukraine at the end of XX century in its pure sense was not interesting for any researcher. That is why this article has an important value for

specialists-practicians of book production field, teachers of special disciplines in book design and also as a subsidiary material for lecture courses and also for authors of other educational literature. Alongside the review format of the work doesn't give a possibility to present stages of transformation of an artistic image of Ukrainian book more detail and to analyze creative methods of concrete masters. These questions were partially elucidated in our previous publications, partially are elaborating now.

The research is realized within a thesis and provides a further elaboration of the scientific problem in the context of modernity and direct introduction at compiling the history of Ukrainian art (Ukrainian graphics), history of design and so on.

## 8. Conclusions

1. Consequently, book design development in Ukraine in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century looks rather ambiguous from an artistic point of view. The radical structural and political state reorganization in the early 1990s divided its history in two separate stages and influenced all art spheres without exclusion, including the book art. Put in other words, the mentioned circumstances influenced the restructuring and reformatting of the entire industry, and strengthened the role of a designer as a co-author of a book. This ensured access to new printing standards and contributed to the development of book publishing industry in Ukraine.

2. Personal communication with the book masters S. Yakutovych, H. Halynska, V. Hor-diyshuk, V. Yerko, K. Lavro, A. Budnyk, and V. Semenyuk gave insight into their artistic methods and moods, which influenced an artistic image of Ukrainian book of the last two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

3. The product of modern Ukrainian book industry was created in the result of the complex interconnection of various factors, both artistic and socio-cultural. One of the main significant changes in the book design sphere was a transition from classical forms, which depended on the outdated production technologies in the Soviet era, to the electronic design and active computerization of all operations in the sphere of book production. Herewith, a transformation of the industrial society into the information society took place and led to the globalization. This new environment influenced the worldview of artists and book designers. Thus, main different artistic features of Ukrainian book of 1990-s compared with the previous decade is, first of all, freedom in choice of a design conception, wider palette of used artistic technologies, co-existence of high-artistic and primitive design-projects in the same space, tendency to the national self-consciousness expression.

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